**PURPOSE:**

To establish guidelines for the level of institutional sponsorship and support to be provided to Meharry Medical College (MMC) students, faculty and staff for visa related issuances, immigration status changes and applications. This policy also applies to MMC faculty, staff, departments, and other units that receive requests from individuals from other institutions (colleges or universities) and/or businesses that have intentions to visit MMC for extended periods of time for reasons including, but not limited to, conducting research in a MMC facility, collaborating with MMC faculty on specific projects, and observations.

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

Institutional sponsorship and support for related Immigration status change applications for faculty members and non-faculty staff members are subject to the conditions set forth below. Spouses and minor children of the sponsored employee shall also be entitled to Institutional sponsorship and support.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Immigrant** – a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.

**Nonimmigrant** – visa issued to persons with a permanent residence outside the U.S. but who wish to be in the U.S. on a temporary basis.

**F-1** – a nonimmigrant visa, specific for students wishing to study in the U.S. One must file for an F-1 visa application if planning to enter the U.S. to attend a university or college, or other learning institution. Visa valid during academic training.

**F-1 CPT (Curricular Practical Training)** - CPT is defined as "alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school." Thus, CPT for F-1 students is intended to provide work experience in the U.S. in situations where the work serves as an integral part of a student's academic program and an established curriculum, prior to completion of that program (see F-1 CPT application for eligibility requirements)

**F-1 OPT (Optional Practical Training)** - F-1 students who have been enrolled in legal student status for at least one academic year are eligible for up to 12 months of
Optional Practical Training (OPT) work authorization to be used as either pre-completion OPT or post-completion OPT by the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS).

J-1 – an Exchange Visitor (EV), also known as a Research Scholar, pursuing a specific program objective for a duration of up to 5 (five) years on this visa.

Sponsor – MMC serves as a "sponsor" for visas such as the Exchange Visitor (EV) program. Specifically, the department along with the MMC Office of General Counsel (OGC), is responsible for selecting participants for the EV program, as well as supporting and monitoring them during their entire program stay.

H-1B – a foreign national seeking temporary employment for a duration up to 6 (six) years.

TN-1 – a Canadian or Mexican citizen seeking temporary employment for duration of one year with indefinite extensions.

EAD (Employment Authorization Document) – the document that proves as evidence that the visa holder is authorized to work in the U.S.; a work permit.

GC – Green Card for Legal Permanent Residency (LPR) (the College does not sponsor)

PROCEDURE:

The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) shall be advised in advance by the appropriate department sponsoring their visit and/or facilitating an initial application for any visa classification.

Projected employment start date and their current visa status should be conveyed to the OGC for any foreign national student and visitors who plan to be at MMC for more than two (2) weeks, and all employment of any non-immigrant alien that may be from a different sponsor.

F-1 (Students)

If during the admissions process, an applicant is identified as having Immigration issues related to their possible enrollment, the Office of Admissions shall promptly notify the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), so that an evaluation of the applicant's immigration status can be made.

F-1 VISA PROCESSING

The OGC shall work with the Division of Student Affairs to ensure students acquiring an F-1 visa have been cleared in terms of completed applications.

The OGC shall work with the Division of Student Affairs to ensure that students acquiring a F-1 visa have submitted complete (and timely) applications with the
appropriate deposits. The OGC and Student Services shall also ensure that students acquiring a F-1 visa have complied with any other institutional requirements that must be fulfilled prior to issuance of a F-1, F-1 CPT, or F-1 OPT visa.

**H-1B or if applicable, J-1 (non-students)**
All faculty or staff visa issues, related to immigration status changes, shall be coordinated by the OGC with outside legal counsel for processing.

The OGC shall prepare, with the assistance of outside legal counsel, as needed, an Immigration Assessment for each faculty or staff member indicating current and recommended time frames for obtaining status changes, and the estimated costs associated with such applications.

The OGC shall work with the Human Resources Department to ensure that all international employees at MMC have satisfactory employment eligibility to work.

**H-1B PROCESSING**
The OGC shall work with the approved external counsel on all matters pertaining to H-1B visa holders.

All visa applicants shall fill out an Immigration Request Form and/or Application specific to their visa request; and all hiring managers must complete an Immigration Support Form to initiate the processing of any visa.

**EXCHANGE VISITOR (EV) PROGRAM, J-1 VISA PROCESSING**

The J-1 exchange visitor classification is the status most commonly used by international visiting scholars and/or researchers. Under the exchange visitor status, scholars, professors, researchers and others may come to the United States for defined periods of time for the purpose of educational exchange. Any international visitor who has sufficient academic training to benefit from an academic or professional program at a United States college or university may be eligible for this status.

**EXHIBITS:**

A) Request for Institutional Visa Sponsorship Form
   (mainly applicable for J-1 and H1-B visa applicants)
B) Immigration Request Form (initial application to all visa applicants)
C) F-1 Newly Admitted Student Information and Application
Subject: Visa and Immigration Services

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